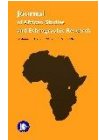




Towards a structural description of some personal names: A case study



Research article



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Abstract

This study focuses on descriptive analysis of structure of personal names in the University of Cape Coast (UCC)'s 49th graduation brochure of the school of graduate studies. With reference to Agyekum (2006)'s classification of given and surnames, the research used doctrinal research method which largely depends on a collection and study of secondary data from various books as published by eminent scholars. This equally refers to as library-based research where texts or documents published in official, legal and journal articles are studied. The study found that personal names in the official document had three different structures of basically two components; given name(s) and surname. The name order is surname before the given name(s) and this is in conformity with name ordering in official documents.

Keywords: anthroponomy, graduation brochure, personal name, structural description



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Introduction

Anthroponomy which is related to genealogy and sociology is the study of personal names. Anthroponomy is a subset of Onomastics. According to Algeo (1992) Onomastics is the study of personal names including its use and form. As individual human beings, our names are that which we carry with us, and as such become our identity markers from the day of birth till our death and even beyond. According to Algeo (1992: 728) “People are almost invariably named, indeed, a human being without a name would be socially and psychologically less than a full man.” Thus, without a name, an individual loses a part of themselves and this lack takes substantially from the person. Human names give an insight into ones identity, background, ethnicity and culture. In the rapid globalisation of today, names become all the more essential. Most Ghanaian parents mostly give their children names that follow the pattern of compulsory first names and surnames or family names, and highly optional middle names. Circumstances that influence the choice of personal names given to children according to Agyekum (2006) include the day of birth, family names, circumstantial names, flora and fauna and physical structure names, theophoric names, honorifics, title names, insinuating, proverbial, insulting and nick names. These names follow a certain order of arrangement usually beginning with the first name(s), ‘middle name(s)’ then family or surname(s). The importance of the structure of personal names is even more critical in the academic settings where students are rewarded or punished based solely on individual merits. Names of students therefore become a pivotal means of identity. One such academic institution is the tertiary or university where students pursue higher education with the aim to secure a better job among other things. It is therefore important that the structure of one’s name is constantly and consistently arranged in the right way particularly during graduation as this order is that which will appear on a graduate’s certificate. The university and for that matter all academic institutions take painstaking measures to ensure that the correct order of names of students is what appears in the graduation brochure under the right department with the appropriate faculty or a college.

Research objectives

This study seeks to do a structural description of names of graduating students of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, as appears in the 49th graduation brochure of the school of Graduate Studies. The study aims at using Agyekum’s (2006) classification of the various components of Akan personal names that make up the structure of the names under study. Therefore, the classifications will be ‘birthday name’, ‘title names’, ‘foreign names’, ‘religious names’ and ‘family or surnames’. There have been various studies on the socio-cultural factors that influence the naming systems and practices of diverse ethnic groups as well as the structure of these personal names. Our study, on the other hand, seeks to do a description of the structure of personal names as they appear in an official document, in this case 49th graduation brochure of the University of Cape Coast. In so doing, the focus of the study would be on a description of the components that make up the structure of the personal names in the document in question.

Agyekum's name classifications on which this study will be drawn

The study is based on the Agyekum (2006) sociolinguistics of Akan personal names. According to him, the appropriate methods of analysing the Akan personal names are through their philosophical and anthropological ideas. To him, an insight into Akan personal names is an invitation to know about the culture, thought, environment, philosophy and religion of the Akan people. His study shows that Akan names indexicalise nature with temporal, personal, spatial and social indexes. The temporal names, in this case, are derived from the day of the week on which a child is born and as such are unique and automatic. There are slight variations that arise solely from the sex of the child. The personal names, on their part, are derived from the family or group name of the family into which the child is born or the person a child is named after. These family names function as group identity markers. More so, the spatial names are based on the place, time, manner or even the fauna and flora within the environment in which the child is born. Lastly, the social deictic names denote power, rank or social standing which people acquire through their exploits in life. Such names include honorific and title names.

We have further discovered that Agyekum's study haven proven that the Akan have names that depict their belief in the powers of the supernatural in the affairs of humans, particularly in giving children. He calls such names "Theophoric" names. Akans also have insinuating, proverbial insulting and nicknames that denote 'sour or bitter relationship that exists between parents and other neighbours.' To him, there are names that are derived from gang, play or occupational names. These names are acquired by the bearer through his life choices and not necessarily given by the parent. He again found out that the structure and system of Akan personal names have undergone some innovations which are attributive to westernization, education, foreign religion and urbanisation. It is on this point Agyekum asserts again that the educated people in particular are drifting towards taking religious names (Christian and Islamic), others still hold on to the traditional Akan names and yet others are dropping 'foreign names' to take on local names.

It is instructive to note according to him that nowadays people are even given multiple names that are susceptible to changes caused by social context and situation. One of those multiple names an individual may have serves as the official name used at the work place and known by colleagues, whilst the other serves as an unofficial one used elsewhere. He adds that the multiple given first names and birth names serve as '*affectionate terms*' which can also be shortened into hypocoristic terms. He also asserts that in the "Akan socio-cultural norms, adult and kings may not be addressed with bare names and this is an aspect of the Akan naming taboo system." As such, "parents, grandparents or chiefs would like to show reverence to their bearers by addressing the children with the appropriate labels and address terms." These kingship labels become part of the official given names of these children throughout their lives. He gives examples of such names as Nana, Papa and Maame.

More so, he talks about anglicised names but that is not so relevant to this current research because the anglicization is solely realised in speech though. Anyway, it is noteworthy that the current study is not limited to any one particular ethnic grouping and their naming practices. It seeks only to do a structural description of names as they appear in the graduation brochure but will employ the above classification construed by Agyekum (2006). Aside following Agyekum's model, there are others who also present empirical works on personal names and other. We will therefore discuss some related works of names.

Literature Review

There have been a number of studies on personal names across various cultures and settings due to their importance in the transmission of a people's socio-cultural ideals. Agyekum who serves as our primary model contributes to studies in linguistic anthropology and asserts that 'there is a strong interface between a people's language and their cultural practices.' He posits that the Akan personal name system and practice is a marker of the people's belief, ideology, culture, philosophy, thought and culture. His study is based on the assertions that names are markers of personal, family and societal identity and as such distinguished people of one ethnicity or nationality from another. It is in this vein that Adebija (2003: 353) argues that "... each ethnic group expresses and identifies itself by the language it speaks and its cultural paraphernalia is shaped by its language." He, then, establishes a direct link between language and identity and concludes that names are significant indices for the reformation of identity and ethnicity.

One finds a very rich body of literature on names and naming practices in other parts of the world. In Singapore, for instance, Tan (2001) finds in his study that traditional Singaporean names which are Chinese (because according to him about 40% Singaporeans are of Chinese descent) are being 'anglicised'. To him, the influence of English on Chinese names in Singapore 'arise out of the increase in literacy and more importantly the use of English language in homes and other private domains. According to his study, these English given names are mostly regarded as 'Christian names' even though there is clear distinction between English and Christian names. His study also finds that the phenomenon of 'anglicisation' is likely to continue "as there seem to be increased English usage amongst the young". Fox (1963) conducts a study that describes the structure of personal names of the people on Tory Island. To him, a person on this island will in fact have three sets of names: a Gaelic 'ceremonial' set; an English 'practical' set; and a Gaelic-English personal set. "A man's full Gaelic name will consist of his baptism name followed perhaps by his 'epithet' such as Og (young –usually means youngest of several brothers) Ban(fair), Mor(big), Beag(small-wee), followed by his surname. Such combination might yield, for example, Padraig Og Mac Ruadhraigh'.

In Africa, Ubahakwe (1981); Gebre (2010); De Klerk (1996) have all dealt variously with names and naming practices, structure of names, social and cultural impacts on names in different parts of the continent. Mensah & Offong (2013) studied the structure of death prevention names among the Ibibio in the south-eastern part of Nigeria. The paper concludes that apart from the

referential contents and metaphysical presuppositions of the Ibibio death prevention names, they have other formal structural properties that differentiate them from ordinary Ibibio names.

In Ghana specifically, Ansu- Kyeremeh (2000) argues that the Bonos (a member of the Akans languages in Ghana) have a two name system which are ascribed names and given names both of which are gender indicative. The ascribed name is derived from the day of birth of the child and the given name is the one which the father gives to the child. Birth order names, nicknames/appellations, month names, circumstantial names and more recently the adoption of religious names can be employed as substitutes for the given and ascribed names. To him, Bono personal names support human interaction as the conduit of communication.

On his part, Adomako (2015) discusses truncations of given name + surname in Akan personal names. He puts forward that the truncation of Akan personal names results from the elision of the “affixal morpheme or initial V or CV syllable of the surname at morpheme boundary of day-name + surname format.” From the above discussions, it can be concluded that though this area of study is very fertile, there has not been exhaustive research in the domain of structural description of personal names as they appear in an official document. Most of the above researchers studied the socio-cultural influences affecting naming systems and practices of diverse ethnicities. Those that studied the structure of personal names similarly do so of specific ethnic groupings. The current study however seeks to describe the structure of personal names as they appear in an official document and so it is not limited to any particular group of people.

Methodology

The doctrinal method of research was adopted in writing this paper. The data for this study was collected from a secondary data; the graduation brochure of the 49th Congregation of the School of Graduate Studies of the University of Cape Coast. This method also referred to as library-based research underpins the study of texts or documents as published in official, legal and journal articles as well as providing commentary based on the context of those documents or texts. Doctrinal research method heavily depends on the collection and study of secondary data from various books as published by eminent scholars. Chynoweth (2006) explains that doctrinal research does not follow the process of empirical investigation hence the strength of its approach is that “the validity of the research finding is unaffected by the empirical world” (p.30). The study concentrated on personal names that were made up of four/five different individual names. The choice of this structure of names was solely based on the fact that such names appear diverse and verbose, hence lent themselves to elaborate structural description analysis. Specifically, this study focused on names of graduating students of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the School of Educational Development and Outreach. The work narrowed on this faculty in that they contained a dense number of the specific structure of names that the study was interested in. The descriptive method of analyses was adopted in order to establish clearly the different variables related to the use of these personal names in the official documents as 49th Graduation Brochure of a university.

Discussions and Analysis

The study looks at personal names that contain three/four individual names belonging to one person. This personal name structure as appeared in the brochure is made up of a surname or family name with three/four given names. An example of one personal name is POKU-ASIAMA, Ellen Afua Boadu. These names are made up of diverse structures as well as of different ethnic group as was expected of a national university that served a nation of people with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. To begin with, the personal names in the data have two basic components just like most names around the world. The components are surname/family names and given names. The family name/surname is usually derived from a name that belongs to or identifies the family of the individual, hence, gives the individual communal identity (Agyekum, 2006). The given name(s) is a unique name given to the individual and are usually influenced by certain factors that surrounds the child's birth.

Our study has revealed that there are three different personal names structures found in the data; (1) surname + one given name, (2) surname + two given names and (3) surname + three/four/five given names. Regardless of the fact that some of the personal names have two names or compound names as surnames, we categorised them as just one surname. At a glance, one would suspect that the two component structures are the dominant structures, however, a count of the three various structures indicates that they are second to the three component structures. The least of the three is the four/five components name structure which comprised a surname and three/four given names (the structure that forms the focus of this study). Among the two faculties, the school of educational development and outreach has the highest number of all the categories of the three structures of personal names and this could be attributed to their sheer numbers. Find below the statistics or the distribution:

No. of component	Faculty of Social Sciences	Sch. of Educational Development. & Outreach
Two components (surname +a given name)	143	226
Three Components (surname +two given names)	184	227
Four/Five Components (surname +three/four given names)	18	30
Total	345	483

Figure 1. Table showing a distribution of the three structures of personal names in the two faculties

One can establish from the 49th graduation brochure the use of an order tracing: family name, given name which can be linked and commonly known as the Eastern order and was primarily used in East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, etc.), as well as in Southern and North-Eastern parts of India, but also in Hungary. It is also popular in France, Belgium, and Italy among others possibly because of the influence of the bureaucratic use of putting the family name before the given name. Possibly, the University brochure's use of the Asian Order is due to the convention that within alphabetic lists and catalogues, the family name is generally put first, with the given name(s) following, separated from it by a comma e.g. (BOTAH, Felix Amoako Kwame), representing "the lexical name order". This convention is followed by most Western libraries, as well as on many administrative forms. It must be reiterated that the brochure is a formal document of the university and so must follow universal conventions. We, however, observed that the family or surnames in the brochure are printed in capital letters followed by a comma: AGBESHIE, Peter Kwadzo; ARTHUR, Benedicta Efua; KYEI-BAFFOUR, Princess; MANAMZOR, Florence Lardi. We found out that some other public universities in Ghana also conform to this practice of printing the surnames in capital letters; probably it is a national convention.

Following the order of the personal names in the graduation brochure, we will start off with the structural analysis with family names or surnames and then later the given names. According to Agyekum (2006), "family names are clan names given to children by their fathers. In the social context, it performs the function of indexing kingship and group membership." Adjah (2015) adds that the name of a family, place names, ethnic names and appellations are likely sources of surnames. The majority of the surnames or family names in the data are 'local', thus they are from the various ethnicities in the country (Ghana). A significant number of those 'local' surnames are single with a few of them being compounded. They include MENSAH, ANDOH, FIANYEHIA, SACKITEY and TUNGBANI for single surnames whereas GBECKOR-KOVE, ABDUL-RAZAK, ALLOTEY-PAPPOE, ODOOM-POKU and GYASI-DUKU are for compound surnames. We discover also surnames that have two individual names. Such surnames include: AMPONSAH WILSON, ADINKRA DARKO. Of these three, the single surnames are the dominant ones, followed by the compound ones and the least is the double name surname. There reveals also surnames that are of foreign descent, some of which are BECKFORD, GRAHAM, MAYNE, BUCKMAN and HARDING. The existence of such foreign names in the data could be confirmation of Agyekum's (2006) assertion that westernisation, education and religion have affected the naming practices of some Ghanaians.

Immediately after the family names/surname is the given name. Here, given name refers to all names beside the surname, we are unable to segregate them into first and middle names because we could not contact the bearers of these names to ascertain which names are first names and which others are middle names. The forenames under study are made up of three/four individual names comprising religious/Christian name, title name, day-name and 'actual name'. We will however proceed to do an analysis of the types of those given names. First, there are given

names that are made up of ‘local names’ only. We call them “local names” because they are names that reflect the socio-cultural names of the various ethnic groups in the country.

The all ‘local’ given names are made up of combinations such as title + day name + actual name e.g. ‘Nana Akua Bema’. ‘Nana’ is a title - which could be an indication that this person holds a position that requires the title or was named after a grandparent, a chief/queen mother or an older woman, ‘Akua’, a day name - the Akan name for a girl born on Wednesday, ‘Bema’ is what we call the ‘actual name’ – the name that is given to the person aside the title and day names. Another combination for only local names found in the data is actual name + sequence of birth name + day name: AKYEA, Kwasi Korkor Adzo. ‘Kwasibea’ is the ‘actual name’, Korkor is the Ga name for a second daughter, and Adzo is for a Ga Monday born daughter.

Furthermore, the structure of forenames found in the data is foreign + day name + actual names. Westernisation, education and urbanisation have brought innovations in the structure and system of Akan names Agyekum (2006). Although this study is not interested in the ethnic backgrounds of the bearers of these personal names, Agyekum’s argument is still relevant. Many first names in the data are not native to any of the ethnic groups of the country. They are rather names that can be associated with Europe, hence the term ‘foreign’. Examples of such forenames include: KODWIW, William Yaw Amuesi; ODOOM-POKU, Eugene Kwamena Bamfo and ABBAM, Janet Esi Yedua. The names ‘William’, ‘Eugene’ and ‘Janet’ constitute the names that are herein referred to as foreign. In all these forenames, we have foreign names followed by day names, ‘actual names then the surnames. More to the point, structure of forenames closely related to the above structure is foreign + title + actual name. Example of such forenames are SACKKEY, Forster Nii Afla, BENTIL, Henriette Naa Lamiley, Here also, ‘Foster’ and ‘Henriette’ are a foreign names, ‘Nii’ and ‘Naa’ are titles (in the Ga language Nii and Naa are title names, Nii is masculine and Naa is feminine) and ‘Afla’ and Lamiley are ‘actual’ names. Additionally, there are also forenames of foreign name + title + day such as ABOLE, Cynthia Naana Akua.

Still on the given names that have foreign names, there is another structure as two foreign names+ Day/Actual name. This includes such names as ANDOH, Robertson Patricia Kukua, MAYNE, Justina Betty Arko, AGBOFA, Francis Justice Kwesi and MENSAH, Angela Tena Ama, GRAHAM, Estherlyn Mari Pearl Afriyie. In these forenames, an individual has two foreign names together with either a day name or an ‘actual name’. The first name in the above is striking in that, in Ghana, the name ‘Robertson’ usually is a surname, however, it appears as a forename in this name. In instances where it is not a surname, it is a forename or forms part of it as male names. Even more noteworthy is the fact that it is paired with the feminine name ‘Patricia’. The oddness of the forename exists in its presence in a socio-cultural setting where measures are put in place to ensure that people are given names that reflect their sex. This reason makes the day name ‘Kukua’ all the more significant as it fulfils the purpose of indicating the sex of the bearer, without which it would have been difficult to ascertain the sex of the bearer.

Another dominant feature of given names in the data of the 49th graduation brochure is religious names; names of characters and places in the Holy Bible or the Holy Quran or any other religion including African Traditional Religion (ATR). According to Abdul (2014), “Religious names are given to children based on the religious affiliations of their parents.” The religious names are also variously paired with title names, day names and actual names like the foreign names. One finds in the data names such as FIANYEHIA, Emmanuel Kwasi Adukpo, TATA, Thomas Kwame Asante, TAGBOR, Sarah Naa Adjeley and ABAH, Mohammed Seidu Issah. The names ‘Emmanuel, ‘Thomas’ ‘Sarah’ are in the Holy Bibles whiles Mohammed and Issah are found in the Holy Quran. Moreover, there are instances where forenames are structured as: religious names + foreign names + Day names/Title names/Actual names. Such structural instances include AZAWODIE, Samuel Richard Mensah; JONAH, Oswald Isaac Kwesi, and ARUNA, Alfred Jeremiah Hingaa. Thus in the above names, foreign names are paired with religious names with instances of day name and actual names as the combination of the forenames. We must admit that for such structures, we did not find instances of it for females in the sample data.

In a huge majority of personal names in this data containing day name and title names different from all ‘local’ or all ‘foreign’ names, the structure of the personal names is foreign/religious name + title + day name + ‘actual name’. Such examples are: BUCKMAN, Joseph Nana Mensah Essuman; ALLOTEY-PAPPOE, Ebenezer Nii Akwei; ADDO-QUAYNOR, Mercy Naa Aki. Thus the title names are sandwiched between the foreign/religious names and the day-name meanwhile the title and day-names (and sometimes the surnames) are the only names that give an indication of the cultural backgrounds of the bearers. The foreign/religious names lead the given names. Once more, in personal names, immediately after the foreign/religious names is the title name, before the day-name. Example: ABOLE, Cynthia Naana Akua; DUWOR, Nana Adjoa Afariwa. The practice of the title name coming before the day name could be an indication that as a title, it must come before these other names. This practice where it comes before the day name and ‘actual name’ possibly arises out of a historical naming practice where the title name preceded all other names in the given names. The ‘actual name’ is the last of the pack of given names. That is, the day name precedes the ‘actual name’. A question that begs for an answer is the fact that the title name comes after the foreign names in personal names and not before it. Example: MENSAH, Ruth Naa Otua and KWEI, Dinah Naa Dodua. As a title name, it is expected that it comes before any other given name. The practice of foreign/religious names leading to the given names perhaps is a direct manifestation of the infiltration of foreign culture and its subsequent elevation over the indigenous Ghanaian culture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper sought to do a descriptive analysis of the structure of personal names in the University of Cape Coast (UCC)’s 49th graduation brochure of the school of graduate studies. The study found that personal names in the official document had three different structures of

basically two components; given name(s) and surname. The name order is surname before the given name(s) and this is in conformity with name ordering in official documents. The components of the names reflect Agyekum's (2006) classification of given and surnames. In effect, the components and the structure of the personal names can be a window into the cultural background and philosophical ideals of bearers of those names. The acquisition of religious and foreign names can be explained as a reflection of the Ghanaian's association with western culture and foreign religions: Christianity and Islam. The prevalence of these names is an indication of a possible elevation of those cultures and religions over that of Ghana.

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